



Together  
we will end  
homelessness

# Team game: A safe bridge

**Preparation time:** 5 minutes

**Activity time:** 30–60 minutes

**Materials:** A ream of paper, paper clips, sticky tape, paper cups, marker pens

**Location:** Somewhere you don't mind getting wet or messy.

## Preparation instructions

**1** Divide your groups into teams of at least 3.

**2** Distribute the materials evenly between the groups. Ensure everyone in each group has a cup.

**3** Ask your group to think of the cup as their home.

**Explain:** Everyone should have a safe, decent home. This is more than the basics of somewhere dry to live.

**4** Using a marker, ask your group to call out something that is important to them at home and why. If it's important to them and others, ask them to draw a line on the cup to indicate how important it is to them. E.g. if they say "food" and others agree that it is important to them too, then everyone draws a line a quarter of the way up from the bottom of the cup with "food" written next to it.

**5** Once everyone has thought of all the things that might be important, and everybody's cup has a few things written on it, ask the group to put their cups aside.

**Explain the challenge:** To create a bridge that holds as many paper cups on it as possible. The bridge must be at least 20cm above a surface. It must be self-supporting using only the materials provided. At the end of the task the bridge must remain standing. Give the group as long as you think necessary to complete the task.

**6** When time runs out, explain that their bridges represent the group and their homes. Their cups will be filled to the top line to indicate what would happen if a sudden pressure such as illness, someone at home losing a job, families separating could do to their "home bridge".

**Explain:** The volume of grapes/sweets represents unpredictable problems that can create pressure such as falling ill, losing a job, an increase in rent that can make your home unstable or push people into homelessness altogether.



**7** Once the cups are filled with sweets/grapes, ask the groups to carefully place their cups on their bridge where they feel it will be supported.

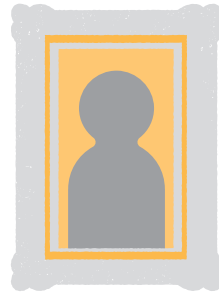
**8** The bridges may hold or collapse. Ask the group what materials they would have liked to help strengthen their bridge and prevent it from falling or coping with the extra pressure of the filled cups.

**Post activity discussion:** Transfer the metaphor of the bridge, the cup, the sweets/grapes and items to strengthen the bridge to the issues involved in tackling and preventing homelessness.

Some of your bridges may have been able to hold few sweets/grapes, (so a bit of pressure), but as more and more are added and pressure builds up, it caused your bridge to collapse.

## Discussion points

- Some of your bridges would have been weaker or stronger depending on how you built it. What do you think the bridge exercise tells us about homelessness?
- Identify points where you think people sit at the brink of homelessness i.e. just before the pressure is too much, and the bridge breaks.
- Most of us have our family or friends for support if we were ill or had nowhere to live. So not everyone is at risk of homelessness. How did it make you feel to know that some people don't have support when the pressure of something unexpected happens?



- Most people can cope with one or two unexpected pressures but when pressure is constant it can build up and push someone into homelessness. Can you think what these might be?
- Do you think homelessness can be prevented? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- What practical things do you think should be put in place to prevent homelessness? This could be as simple as speaking to someone about their housing needs before they leave care or a hospital, or larger initiatives such as building a set number of affordable homes a year.

## Why we should end homelessness

Crisis believes everyone should have a safe and secure place to call home. Only then can everyone play a positive part in society. Everyone contributing creates a stronger society for all – what affects one of us affects us all.

People lose their homes when the rising pressure from high rents and low incomes becomes too much. When stresses like these are constant, they can build up and push people into homelessness. Without government support, a sudden increase in pressure, like losing a job, becoming ill, or leaving home to get out of a bad relationship, can quickly force people into homelessness.

Scotland is the first country in Great Britain to have a plan to end homelessness and Wales is well on it's way to creating one too. In England in the early 2000s we dramatically reduced the number of people sleeping on our streets, and there places around the world which have rapidly reduced and even ended some forms of homelessness. We have a choice, we can do nothing and more people will be without

a place to live; or we can work together across our community to end homelessness for good.

We can end homelessness for good. This doesn't mean that no-one will ever lose their home again, but that everyone facing homelessness gets the help they need quickly. It means making sure we all have a place to live, and together doing everything we can to stop people from losing their homes in the first place.

### Next steps

- Complete another activity by searching online 'Crisis resources for young people'
- Look at how you can support Crisis, by campaigning, volunteering or fundraising: [www.crisis.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.crisis.org.uk/get-involved)
- Research what is in place to help people at risk of homelessness in your area and write to your council if you think more can be done.